

SKAT FOR BEGINNERS

by

Calmer Browy

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To the Beginner

This pamphlet was prepared to help you learn the most fascinating of card games. The author is only an average player, but his recent experience in starting new players and his writing background may help him know your problems and answer your questions briefly and clearly.

Only the basic principles of skat are stated in this pamphlet. You will pick up advanced and psychic plays best from watching and playing skat. One way to speed up your learning is to play skat solitaire--deal out, bid, and play hands face up.

In using this pamphlet, first skim through it; then review the general suggestions heading Chapters II, III, and IV; and, finally, with the aid of the table of contents, study particular subjects. The bidding summary on page 27 is in the middle of the pamphlet for quick reference.

For further reading two excellent books are "Book of Rules and Instructions for Skat and Schafskopf," written in 1935 by Walter J. Zarse, Milwaukee, and "How to Play Skat," written in 1942 by Joseph P. Wergin, Madison. Wergin started the writer in skat and thereby added much to his enjoyment of life. May this pamphlet do likewise for you.

Calmer Browy

Madison, Wis.
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CHAPTER I

The Game of Skat

Card games generally have one of three primary goals: (1) Taking of tricks, (2) holding of combinations of cards, or (3) capture of count cards. Bridge typifies the first; poker, the second; and skat, the third.

Skat is a combination of the Italian game of tarots, invented in the 14th century, and the German-Slavic game of schafskopf (sheepshead), which has been played for nearly 300 years. Skat is almost 200 years old. The game was brought to America about 1850. American players about 1890 added the bid of grand guckser. The North American Skat League was organized in 1898; it still holds a tournament each summer. Wisconsin, with possibly more skatplayers than any other state, has a state league which holds spring and fall tournaments.

The word "skat" is a German shortening of the Italian word "scartare" meaning "discard" and refers to the blind of two cards.

Dealing

Skat is a three-handed game. When four play, the dealer sits out his deal. Each deal of 10 tricks played is a game. The deck has 32 cards, 7-spots low. All 32 cards are dealt out clockwise in the following invariable order: Starting with lead hand to left of dealer, 3-3-3, two to the blind, called the skat, 4-4-4, and 3-3-3. The

deck must be cut before the deal, ordinarily by the person to dealer's right. The first deal is by the person to left of scorer. The deal passes to the left. The cards are picked up during the deal to speed up bidding.

Bidding

The players bid in numbers for the right to choose the game and play alone against the other two. A player can score only when he plays alone. The winning bidder in the two-part bidding auction chooses the game which must have a score equal to or higher than his final bid.

The lowest bid is 10; the highest, 216. Each bid made must equal a possible score. The bidding auction is unusual in that the lead hand can get the bid merely by equaling the highest bid of the other two players, while if Lead passes, the player to his left can get the bid by merely equaling the highest bid of the third player. To equal a bid is called "to hold."

The two-part bidding auction is:

Four at Table

1st bidder	-----?
: : :	-----?
Lead : : 2nd	Lead : : 2nd
: : Bidder	-----?
-----?	-----?
Dealer	Dealer

Three at Table

1st bidder	-----?
: : :	-----?
Lead : : 2nd	Lead : : 2nd
: : Bidder	-----?
-----?	-----?
Dealer	Dealer
(2nd Bidder)	

First Part: First bidder bids to Lead, who either equals the bid (by saying "yes" or "hold" or repeating the bid) or passes. This part of

the auction continues until one passes.

Second Part: Second bidder then enters the auction and bids to the survivor of the first part. Second bidder must start with a bid higher than the last previous bid. The auction ends when either the survivor or the second bidder passes. If both first and second bidders pass without bidding, Lead has the option of either (1) bidding 10 and playing any game he chooses or (2) passing and announcing ramsch (a game played only when all pass; each plays for himself and tries to get least). Re-deals therefore are not needed in skat.

Example. First bidder bids 10. Lead says, "Hold." First bidder then bids 12. Lead passes. Second bidder now bids 14. First bidder says, "Yes." Second bidder passes. First bidder announces the game.

Various Games

Skat consists of nine kinds of games: Grand ouvert; grand solo; grand guckser; grand tournee; club, spade, heart, or diamond solo; club, spade, heart, or diamond tournee; null ouvert; null; and ramsch.

The word "grand" in the name of a game means that only jacks are trumps. "Ouvert" means "open" and "tournee" means "turn." Throughout this pamphlet the American words will be used.

In all games except open null and null, at least the four jacks are trumps; the seven-card suits rank A-10-K-Q-9-8-7; the jacks rank club high, spade second, heart third, and diamond fourth; and when a suit is trump in addition to the four jacks, the 11 trumps rank club jack top,

spade jack next, heart jack, diamond jack, and A-10-K-Q-9-8-7.

In open null and null there are no trumps; the eight cards in suits rank A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7.

The successful bidder is opposed by the two others as partners in all games except a ramsch and is called the Player. Hereafter when the word is written "Player," it means the successful bidder who plays alone against the two others.

Play of the Cards

The opening lead is always made by the one to left of dealer. The location of the opening lead is an important factor in bidding and play.

Each person plays on each trick in turn clockwise around the table. The person winning a trick leads to the next trick.

The highest trump on a trick wins the trick regardless of what was led. With no trump card played, the highest card of the led suit wins the trick.

When trump is led, a person holding trump must play it. For example, with clubs trump, if the diamond jack is led, a person with the heart jack and club king can play either card. If only jacks are trump and a jack is led, a person with a jack must play it. A person without trump may play any card when trump is led.

When a side suit (a suit which is not trump) is led, a person holding cards of such suit must play one. A person without cards in a led side suit has the choice of playing a trump or any other card. The three side suits are equal.

Description of Games.

The object of the Player in grand and suit solos, grand guckers, and in grand and suit turns is to take at least 61 of the 120 points in count cards. Aces count 11, tens 10, kings 4, queens 3, and jacks 2. Nines, eights, and sevens have no count value. The object of the partners in these count-card games is to prevent the Player from capturing sufficient points in count cards to win. The taking of tricks is only a means of capturing count cards. A game may be won or defeated with two or three tricks.

It cannot be too strongly stated that in the count-card games, a person must know at all times how many and which trumps have been played and how many points in count cards at least one side has taken. A running silent count is kept by each person during play. Without such count, one cannot make proper plays at the right time. With practice the counting becomes almost automatic. The usual way to count is "15-3," "30-3," etc., after each trick with the first number representing your total points and the second the trumps already played. When counting opponents' points, state trumps first, as "3-15," etc.

Brief descriptions of all the games follow.

Open Grand. A very rare game. Only jacks are trumps. The Player's cards are laid face up on the table before the first lead. The Player does not use the skat, but any jack therein may affect his score. See "Scoring." If the opponents take one trick, the Player loses.

Grand Solo. Only jacks are trumps. The Player does not use the skat, but the cards in it count for him and a jack may alter his score.

No one sees the cards in the skat until the hand is played.

Grand Guckser. Usually called just "guckser." Only the jacks are trumps. The Player scoops up the two skat cards without showing them to the opponents and discards any two of his 12 cards. The laid away cards count for him.

Grand Turn. Only jacks are trumps. This game may be played only if Player turns a jack in the skat. See "Suit Turn" below for method of turning. The Player lays away two cards after he turns a jack and announces a grand turn. Such cards count for him. He need not show his opponents the other card in the skat.

Suit Solo. There are 11 trumps--the four jacks and a suit of the Player's choosing. The Player does not use the skat, but the cards count for him and a trump may affect his score. No one sees the skat cards until the hand is finished.

Suit Turn. The 11 trumps are the four jacks and a suit. The Player announces that he will turn and then peeks at one card in the skat. If it is of a suit he is willing to have as trump, he turns up the card to indicate trump. If not, he must turn up the second card, suit of which becomes trump unless it is a jack. If the Player turns a jack on first or second turn, he has the choice of playing a grand turn or a suit turn. If he chooses to play a suit turn, the suit must be that of the turned jack. The Player need not show his opponents the card in the skat not turned. It is courteous to leave the turned card on the table while deciding the layaway.

Open Null. There are no trumps, the suits each have eight cards, and the cards in each suit

rank A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7. The Player exposes his cards before the first lead. If he is forced to take a trick, he loses. He does not use the skat. The score is 40.

Null. This game differs from open null in only two ways, (1) the Player does not expose his hand and (2) the score is 20.

Ramsch. This game is played only if all three persons pass. Only the jacks are trump, and the seven-card suits rank A-10-K-Q-9-8-7. This is the only game in which there are no partners nor Player. Each person plays for himself and tries to take the fewest possible points in count cards. The cards in the skat count against the person taking the tenth trick. The winner scores 20 if he takes no tricks; otherwise, 10. However, if one person takes all the tricks, he is considered a loser and scores a loss of 30, and there is no winner. If two tie for least points when all three have taken tricks, the one of the two tied players who took his total points the earlier wins. If all three should tie, lead hand wins.

Schneider and Schwarz

In the count-card games (grand solo, suit solo, guckser, grand turn, and suit turn), if the Player takes 91 or more points in count cards he prevents his opponents from getting out of schneider, i.e., taking 30 points. If the Player fails to take 31 points, the opponents have prevented him from getting out of schneider. If the Player takes all the tricks, he has schwarz; if the partners do, they have schwarz.

Announcing Schneider or Schwarz

The Player before the first lead in a grand

solo or suit solo may announce schneider or schwarz, much as a little slam or grand slam is bid in bridge. His purpose in announcing is to increase his score, as explained under "Scoring." The Player may not announce in a game where he uses the skat. The play of an open grand automatically announces schneider and schwarz. The announcement of schwarz automatically announces schneider also. If the Player after announcing schneider captures 61 or more points but fails to get 91 points, he nevertheless loses. Likewise, if the Player announces schwarz and fails to take all the tricks, he loses.

Scoring

Only the Player can score. If he loses, he scores a loss. In tournament play the scorecard has a won and lost column for each person, 80 hands are played (60 at a three-handed table), and each game is scored on a separate line. On a scorecard, No. 1 hand is to left of scorer, No. 2 across the table, No. 3 to his right, and scorer is No. 4 except at a three-handed table, where No. 3 scores. In informal table play, a running score is kept for each person; won scores are added and lost scores subtracted; and play may end at any time with a deal by scorer (a complete round).

After tournament play is completed, lost games are deducted from won games to get net games; total lost points are deducted from total won points to get net points; first prize goes to high net games; second prize, to high net points. Other prizes go to winners of unusual hands of two kinds, (1) those played against four or more of the highest trumps and (2) those making a high score. In table play only high net points count unless otherwise agreed.

Tricks or points captured merely decide the winner and are not the Player's score.

The fixed scores for open null, null, and ramsch were stated above.

For all other games the score varies from a minimum of twice to a maximum of 26 times (open grand, six to nine times) the basic unit score of the game played. The smallest winning or losing score is 10; the highest winning score, 216; the greatest losing score, 224.

The basic unit score for each game is:

Open Grand	24	Club Solo	12	Club Turn	8
Grand Solo	20	Spade Solo	11	Spade Turn	7
Gr. Guckser	16	Heart Solo	10	Heart Turn	6
Grand Turn	12	Diam. Solo	9	Diam. Turn	5

Note that the scores for the four grand games are spaced four points apart; that the scores for suit solos are four points higher than for turns in the same suits; that the lowest grand game has the same score as the highest suit solo; and that the score for the lowest suit solo is one more than for the highest suit turn.

To figure the score of a hand, multiply the unit score of the game played by a number made up of (a) the number of high trumps in sequence starting with the club jack held by the Player in his hand and the skat or, if he does not have the club jack, then the number of trumps held by the opponents which are higher than the Player's highest trump, plus (b) one for game won or lost, plus (c) one for schneider, plus (d) one for announcing schneider, plus (e) one for schwarz, plus (f) one for announcing schwarz. A loss score is figured likewise.

The most high trumps in sequence the Player can have in his hand and the skat (called "with") is 11 in a suit game and 4 in a grand game. The most trumps the Player can play "against" is 11 in a suit solo; 10 in a suit turn, since he must turn and hold at least the 7-spot for trump; and 4 in a grand game. Nevertheless, the Player may have as many as 10 trumps in his hand and the skat and still be only "with one" because an opponent holds the spade jack, second highest trump, to break the Player's sequence of high trumps immediately below the club jack. On the other hand, the opponents may hold 10 of the 11 trumps, but the Player is only "against one" with spade jack.

To balance the advantage the Player has in seeing both cards in the skat, he loses double in a guckser or a second-card grand or suit turn.

Examples of Scoring. (1) Player wins open grand with all four jacks. His score is 216 from the formula, "With 4, plus one for game is 5, plus one for schneider is 6, plus one for schneider announced is 7, plus one for schwarz is 8, plus one for schwarz announced is 9, multiplied by 24, the basic unit score of open grand, equals 216." (2) Player loses a second-card diamond turn and his highest trump is the heart jack. He fails to take 31 points in count cards. His score of 40 lost is figured thus, "Against 2, game not made is 3, schneider not made is 4, multiplied by 5, the basic unit score for diamond turn, is 20, times 2 because of second turn is 40." The form usually is, "With 2, game 3, schneider 4, etc., times (basic score)."

The Player may be overbid if a trump in the skat reduces the number of high trumps he was "against" or when neither card in the skat in a turn game permits play of a suit with a value

sufficient to equal his final bid. In such cases he loses even though he captures 61 points. His loss score is figured by using the next higher multiplier. So, a Player bidding 12 with one black jack who turns a diamond loses 15 or, in case of second turn, 30 unless he can keep opponents out of schneider to add one multiplier of the unit score to make 15.

Table Stakes

If skat is played for table stakes, amounts won and lost are figured on the difference in the net points. Several methods are used to figure winnings and losses quickly. The commonest one is to add all net points and deduct any minus score, divide by the number of players at the table to get the average, and have each collect or pay on how much his score is above or below such average. The sums owing or won are rounded out to the nearest nickel. Amounts won and lost must balance.

Usual stakes are 1 cent per point's difference between one's net points and the average. Therefore the money won or lost by the Player at such stakes on a single hand at a table of four is three-fourths, and at a table of three is two-thirds, of his score.

Rules of Play

Rules of play are strictly enforced.

Dealing. A misdeal occurs if the deck is not cut first, if the dealer exposes a card during the deal, or if he does not deal in correct order or number. A misdeal cannot be corrected after bidding has started. The hand must be played. If Player has more or less than 10 cards, he loses.

He wins with 10 cards if either partner has more or less. Each should count his cards as dealt.

A hand dealt out of turn must be redealt if noticed before bidding starts. If the bidding has started, the hand is played and the order of deals corrected at first chance to give all the same number of deals.

Dealer. The dealer should not look at the skat. In tournament play he may be penalized 100 points for looking. He has the duty of calling attention to any error in play he observes without seeing a hand.

The Player. After making sure the others have passed, the Player, before touching the skat, must announce the game clearly. If after announcing a turn, he first turns a jack, he may play a grand turn only if he so announces before seeing the second skat card. If he says nothing, the game is a suit turn in the suit of the turned jack. However, he is not bound by his first turn and, after announcing "second turn," he may turn again and play the suit of the second card as trump, or a grand turn if the second card is a jack. He may throw in his hand and claim schneider at any time before the second card is played on the second trick. This saves time when he cannot win. The Player should not look at his layaway after the first trick has been turned. In case of dispute, he must prove he won.

Turned Tricks. A turned trick may be looked at ~~after it has been~~ turned but not after the next lead. Turned tricks should be kept in order for checking in case of dispute.

Partners' Play. It is unfair and improper for a partner to draw a card from his hand before

his turn to play, to make any remarks, or in any other way except by proper play of the cards to give his partner any information. If a partner starts to play a card and exposes it, it must be played.

Misplay by Player. If the Player misplays by leading out of turn (except first lead at a three-handed table), by failing to follow trump or suit when he can, or by laying away too many or too few cards after using the skat, he at once loses the game, both in table play and in tournaments, regardless of the points or tricks he has already taken. An opponent may have play continued, however, to increase the Player's loss by schneidering or schwarzing him. A misplay occurs as soon as a wrongly played card is exposed. If the Player before the end of a game exposes his remaining cards and claims all remaining tricks, he loses if he cannot take all unless at the time he already has sufficient points in his hand and in the skat or layaway to win.

Misplay by Partner. If one of the partners misplays by a lead out of turn (except first lead at a three-handed table) or by failure to follow trump or suit when he can, the Player in table play wins unless he wants to continue in order to schneider or schwarz the opponents. In either case the misplaying opponent is penalized the amount scored by the Player. If play stops with the misplay, the Player's points, including those on the trick on which the misplay occurred, determine whether he has schneidered the opponents.

In tournament play a partner's misplay must be corrected and play continued to determine if the Player can win, since he can get credit for a won game in a tournament only by actual play. The tournament penalty for a misplay by one of the

partners is scored within a circle, does not count in his final tournament score, and counts only in figuring table stakes. The penalty equals the amount won or lost by the Player on the hand.

When a partner exposes his remaining cards, he thereby claims that the Player has lost. All remaining tricks belong to the Player. If the Player has enough points to win, such opponent scores a misplay.

Ramsch Misplay. In ramsch a person who misplays cannot win and in addition scores a loss equal to the winner's score. A misplay in ramsch is always corrected.

A Few Hints

Approach each hand as an individual problem. Do not try to make all hands fit a set rule. Do not play mechanically.

Think before you play. Do not let others rush you into playing too fast.

Try to count trumps and points during play even if the counting slows down your play. In no other way can you become a good counter. Practice counting when you watch a game.

Do not worry about mistakes or criticism. The best players occasionally make bad errors.

Do not hold post-mortems on each hand. You can have more fun playing the next hand. Once in a while, however, a post-mortem helps your game.

Use the many opportunities which skat gives to match wits and play personalities.

CHAPTER II

Bidding

Bidding is a vital part of skat. A badly bid hand may be a lost hand no matter how skillfully played. The time to eliminate most losing hands is while bidding.

General Suggestions

1. Listen carefully to bids of other players, try to figure out what jacks and long suits they hold, and bid accordingly. Take into account what you know about the bidding and play of others.

2. Ordinarily bid your hand to its safe limit. If another becomes the Player, you will have given information to the person who becomes your partner on where the trumps and high cards are.

3. Judge your hand first for possible play of only jacks as trumps, next as a suit solo, and last as a turn or you may not get the most out of your cards.

4. In considering play of a suit solo or suit turn, think first of your weak suit as trump because it has more value as trump than as a side suit. Try to keep your strong suits for side suits.

5. Your aces and tens are stronger for point-taking purposes with spot cards (9s, 8s, and 7s) than with kings and queens. If you have the spot

cards, your opponents must yield kings and queens on your ace and ten leads. The same is true when you hold jacks with two or more spot cards in the trump suit.

6. How you arrange the cards in your hand is a matter of personal preference. It may help you judge your hand quickly to put the jacks in the middle between the long suits with the short suits at each end. A long suit is three or more cards.

7. Know where the opening lead is before valuing your hand. With the lead you often can play a grand solo, guckser, or grand turn that you cannot play without the lead. Typical grand hands in this chapter are shown with and without the opening lead.

8. If your hand has unusual division of suits, expect the opponents' hands to look like your's.

What the Bids Mean

Providing the others bid the full value of their hands, you can interpret their final bids from the following list. Your own cards may help you tell which of several possible hands a bid shows.

10, 12, or 14. Turn, one black jack as top trump.

15 Turn, either both black jacks or heart jack as top trump.

18 (a) Diamond solo, one black jack as top trump.
(b) Turn with both black jacks or heart jack as top trump.

- 20 (a) Heart solo, one black jack as top trump.
(b) Null.
(c) Turn "with" or "against" three top jacks.
- 21 (a) Turn, both black jacks or heart jack as high trump, black suits.
(b) Freak "against" hand.
- 22 Spade solo, one black jack as top trump.
- 24 (a) Club solo, one black jack as top trump.
(b) Turn, "with" or "against" three top jacks, no diamond suit.
- 25 Turn, all four jacks, no good suit.
- 27 Diamond solo, "with" or "against" two.
- 30 Heart solo, "with" or "against" two.
- 32 Guckser, one black jack as top trump.
- 33 Spade solo, "with" or "against" two.
- 36 (a) Club solo, "with" or "against" two.
(b) Diamond solo, "with" or "against" three.
- 40 (a) Grand solo, one black jack as top trump.
(b) Heart solo, "with" or "against" three.
(c) Open null.

Minimum Bid Requirements

In the following sample hands "x" represents a nine, eight, or seven; C, S, H, and D, the four suits; and J, A, K, Q, and 10, jack, ace, king, queen, and ten.

Open Grand. Ten probable winning tricks with the hand laid face up before the opening lead and

only jacks as trumps.

Lead	Any Position
J-C-A	J-C-A10
J-S-A10xx	J-S- -
H- -	H-A10Kx
D-A10K	J-D-A

Both hands are "with" two and score 168. Your only risk in the lead hand is that the remaining three spades are in one hand. In the other hand your two risks are (1) that the remaining three hearts are in one hand and (2) that the hand with the heart jack can trump a suit led by his partner and held by you.

Grand Solo, Grand Guckser, and Grand Turn.
To control the play and capture at least 61 points, you as Player should hold:

- (1) At least five of nine controls--the opening lead, the four jacks, and the four aces; and
- (2) For a solo, seven sure tricks; for a guckser, six sure tricks before you pick up the skat; and for a grand turn, six sure tricks after you turn a jack.

Disregard the "5-of-9" rule, holding the stated sure tricks (1) with either three or four jacks, (2) with all four aces, or (3) in the lead with any two jacks and a 4-card or longer suit headed by A-10. In these cases you have control without complying with the 5-of-9 rule.

To count sure tricks, add your jacks to the total tricks the other cards will take against common division of remaining cards and subtract the tricks opponents may take with jacks under your plan of play. On this basis, the grand solo hands below have seven sure tricks.

Exceptions to "Sure Trick" rule: (1) With the lead and any one jack, figure the lead of such jack will usually drop two of the three jacks held by opponents. (2) With the four aces and no jacks do not subtract tricks your opponents will take with jacks because successful play of such hand depends on their being unable to trump the first lead of any suit. (3) With grand solo strength but a lone ten, play a guckser and lay away such high-count loser. (4) With a six-trick hand that needs no layaway and appears fairly sure to take 61 points, play a grand solo to avoid the risk of a double loss in a guckser.

Experts sometimes can shade the sure trick requirements and win. You as a beginner cannot.

With a grand solo so powerful that the opponents are unlikely to take 30 points, announce schneider to increase your score.

Typical hands in the three grand games are:

Grand Solo

Lead	Any Position
C - -	C-10KQ9
S-A10Kxx	J-S - -
J-H-Ax	J-H-Ax
J-D-A	J-D-A

You safely may bid either hand to 40. With the lead hand, you should not lead a jack unless you are certain each opponent has one. If in doubt, play your spade suit until an opponent trumps. As you regain the lead, continue the suit or play the aces until the remaining jack is played. With the other hand, either lead a jack or play clubs until the ace is played and then force the club jack by.

leading the spade jack or playing side suit cards.

Guckser (before skat is picked up)

Lead	Any Position
------	--------------

J-C-A10x	J-C-Ax
S-A	S-A10
H-Ax	H-xx
D-10KQ	J-D-A10

Your maximum bid on either hand is 32. With the lead hand, play the club jack at once followed by diamond leads to force out the ace. With the other hand lay away hearts if there are none in the skat, so you can trump a heart lead with your diamond jack and then possibly capture the other two jacks with your club jack. If the spade and heart jacks are in one opponent's hand, promptly play your high cards to get in 61 points.

Grand Turn (before turn)

Lead	Any Position
------	--------------

C-A10x	C-A10x
S-A10x	J-S-Ax
H-A10x	H-Ax
D-x	J-D-x

The lead hand is risky. You should not bid it up to more than 21, preferably 15, because you must find a jack, two clubs, two spades, two hearts, or a diamond in the skat and even distribution in the opponents' hands to win. Concerning the diamond, see "Freak Bids." If you turn a jack, play a grand turn, lead the jack at once, and sluff spot cards on opponents' diamond leads. With two tens laid away, you have a reasonable chance of winning. If you turn a jack with the other hand after a bid of

not more than 12 (choice of heart, spade, or club turn), you have a hand with the strength of a guckser and should play a grand turn.

Suit Solo. If a hand lacks the minimum requirements for a grand solo or guckser but is strong because of high cards or long suit or both, consider it as a suit solo. A solo hand usually contains five or more trumps, has not more than three losing cards in the side suits, and should win at least six tricks. Unless you have both ace and ten of trump, you ordinarily need both black jacks or three jacks to make the hand a winner unless you have no side suit without the ace. With a loser in each side suit, you need a solid trump suit with no losers.

You are safer with spot cards as losers than lone tens or kings which add points to opponents' tricks. You are also safer to have the side suit losers in one or two suits than in all three suits.

Joseph P. Wergin in "How to Play Skat" has a point table, similar to bridge honor-trick tables, to evaluate a hand as a suit solo:

Each jack and trump suit card	1
High cards in side suits	
A	1
AK	1½
A10	2
A10K	2½
10x	½
10K	1
10KQ	1½
1 blank suit, 6 or more trump	1

If your hand counts $7\frac{1}{2}$ points under such table and will win at least half the 36 count points in trump, it should ordinarily win as a suit solo.

If the hand will not win at least half the trump count, it must count to 8 or more to be a winner. You may shade the count to 7 but no lower on a hand so strong in trump that it will take at least 28 of the 36 trump points.

Suit Solo

Example 1: C-A10xx	Example 2: J-C-Kx
S-Ax	J-S-XXX
H-A10	J-H-A
J-D-x	D-x

Example 1 can be bid safely to 24 as a club solo. It has five trumps including A-10 and only two side-suit losers. It counts 8 under the Wergin table. Example 2 with six trumps and three side-suit losers counts only 7 as a spade solo but may take all 36 points in trump.

You rarely announce schneider or schwarz in suit solos because so strong hands usually can be played for a higher score as a grand game.

Play safe suit solos in preference to risky grand solos or guckser.

Suit Turn. If your hand does not meet the minimum requirements for a grand solo, guckser, or suit solo, consider it as a suit turn. Be warned, however, that turn hands are gambles; you risk not finding a desired card in the skat. It is therefore better to play a weak solo than to make a riskier-than-usual turn.

Think of a suit turn hand as an incomplete suit solo which you can make into a good solo with the help of the skat and the layaway. With the skat you will lengthen the trump by at least one card and may strengthen a side suit. With the

layaway you may create a blank in one or even two side suits, may eliminate two losing cards from the hand, or may put away safe from capture count cards equal to an average trick.

To have mathematical chance favor your finding a desired card in the skat, you must have as possible trump suits at least two 3-card suits with one jack and at least two 2-card or longer suits with two or more jacks and at least eight cards, including the jacks, outside your hand which you are willing to turn as trump.

In addition, if the hand is to win, you need enough high cards to give the hand a $6-6\frac{1}{2}$ count before the turn (under the Wergin table) with two or more suits each assumed as trump.

If there are eight cards including jacks outside your hand that you are willing to turn as trump, the odds are 3-2 in favor of your finding one such card in the skat. If there are nine or ten such cards outside your hand, the odds in your favor increase to 2-1; if 11 cards, to 3-1; if 12 cards, 4-1; and if 15 cards, 9-1 in your favor.

Example:

Before Turn	
J-C-10KQ	
J-S-7	
H-A7	
D-108	

After Layaway	
J-C-10KQ	
J-S-A	
H-A	
D-1098	

The diamond 9 and spade A were in the skat. The best layaway is the spade 7 and heart 7. Before the turn the hand counts $6\frac{1}{2}$ in clubs and diamonds. The club A, 9, 8, and 7 and the diamond J, A, K, Q, 9, and 7 are outside your hand, a total of 10 cards. The odds therefore were 2-1 for your

finding either a club or a diamond in the skat. After you lay away the losing spade 7 and heart 7, the hand, ready to play, counts $8\frac{1}{2}$ in diamonds. It has been made into a good solo.

You can also use the mathematical odds given above to figure your chances of helping a solo or guckser with the skat.

For the odds to operate, you must turn the second card if the first is unfavorable. But, if you are "with" or "against" two or more high trumps in sequence, you may find it desirable to take a fair first turn rather than to risk a big loss from a bad second turn.

You should not bid a turn hand higher than the bid for the lower of two, preferably three, suits which you are prepared to play, or odds will be against your turning a suit you can play without being overbid. In the above hand a bid of 15 is recommended as the maximum.

Turns are particularly risky on hands with two lone cards or with a lone card and a blank suit because the mathematical chance of turning into the blank or lone-card suits is greater than of turning the long suits. Turns with no jacks are also risky; but see "Freak Bids."

Suit Turn

Example 1: C-A

J-S-Kx

J-H-Qx

J-D-10x

Example 2: J-C-AKx

S-AQx

H-AKx

D- -

Do not bid example 1 above 10. A spade, heart, or diamond turned will produce a winner. Bid 12 on example 2. Any suit but diamonds should win.

Open Null and Null. If you cannot play a grand solo, guckser, or suit solo that will score 40 or more, consider your hand for an open null. If you have no bid except a turn or a diamond or heart solo "with" or "against" one, check your hand as a null.

Remember that in null and open null there is no trump, suits are eight cards long, and cards rank A-K-Q-J-10-9-8-7. Your high cards must be guarded by low cards and length in suit. A lone eight in an open null is risky unless you have the lead to play such card at once. Any suit of three or more cards without the seven is an almost sure loser. Any three-card suit headed by ace or king is usually a loser, as is a four-card suit headed by A-K, K-Q, or A-Q. Expect that an opponent will lead his shortest suit and that the partner at first chance will continue the suit.

By bidding a null you admit a probable loser, and standard defense with the short suit opened and re-led usually will find such loser.

Open Null

Lead

C-8
S-AJ1087
H-K987
D- -

Any Position

C- -
S-J97
H-AKJ1097
D-7

You can bid either hand to 40. Note that the second hand, as is frequently the case, can be played as either a solo or an open null. The heart solo, however, scores only 20 and is weak while the open null scores 40 without risk.

With a null hand in lead position not good

enough to play open, do not bid but play a ramsch if the others pass. If you do not take a trick, you score 20 without risk.

Most skatplayers bid too many losing nulls because null has the fascination of a game of hide-and-seek. The bid admits a loser, or the hand would be played open. The opponents try to find the loser.

Ramsch. If your hand does not come up to the minimum requirements of any bid, pass. Then, if the others pass, a ramsch will be played. If you are in the lead, do not turn with a losing hand in the hope that there are jacks and aces in the skat. Much of the time the cards merely are divided so evenly among the hands that no one has a bid.

Freak Bids. Prizes are awarded in tournaments for freak "against" hands which rarely win because the odds are heavily against the Player. Such hands are a losing proposition in table play but are worth playing in tournaments because of the prizes, particularly if you have no chance to win a prize for net games or net points.

The highest-scoring freak hand is a club solo "against" 11, which scores 144. With no clubs, you declare clubs trumps and try to take 61 points in the other three suits aided by count cards in the skat. These hands win in three, four, or five tricks. Everything must break perfectly and no high trump can be in the skat. The top bid on such hands is 21 because if others can bid higher, the division of cards is uneven and an "againstster" has no chance of winning.

Play a freak turn with losing tens to save.

Bidding Summary

	:Unit :	
Game	:Score :	Bidding Requirements
:Open Grand	: 24	: 10 probable winning tricks
:Grand Solo	: 20	: 5 of 9 controls (4 jacks, 4 : aces, first lead), 7 tricks
:Gr. Guckser	: 16	: 5 of 9 controls (4 jacks, 4 : aces, first lead), 6 tricks
:Grand Turn	: 12	: Same as for a guckser after : you have turned a jack
:Club Solo	: 12	: 5 or more trumps; 6 or more
:Spade Solo	: 11	: sure tricks; not more than
:Heart Solo	: 10	: 3 losing cards in the side
:Diam. Solo	: 9	: suits, less with weak trump
:Club Turn	: 8	: 2 or more suits which with
:Spade Turn	: 7	: a card added will make a
:Heart Turn	: 6	: solo and 8 or more cards of
:Diam. Turn	: 5	: such <u>suits</u> outside hand
:Open Null	: 40	: No card with which you can : be made to take a trick
:Null	: 20	: About same as open null : except for one risky card
:Freak Hand		: No jacks, 3 aces, one or : more tens, spot cards
:Ramsch	: 10, 20:	: No bid or a null in lead

The minimum scores are 144 for an open grand,
twice the unit score for next 11 games.

CHAPTER III

Play as the Player

Although as Player you have only 12 cards in your hand and the skat against the 20 cards of the two opponents, you have certain advantages:

(1) Use of the skat in guckser and turn hands with the layaway of count cards safe from capture or the discard of losers; (2) the fact that in solos the skat, though not used, counts for you; (3) the fact that on each trick you play one card while your opponents must play two; and (4) your freedom, playing alone, to play your cards in a confusing and deceptive manner.

General Suggestions

As Player, play trump first to use up the opponents' trumps two at a time.

Both in trump and in side suits, try to lose the tricks you must lose before either opponent has a chance to get blank, either by trumping or discarding, in order to smear to his partner's tricks. (See "Smearing" in next chapter). Also discard losers on low-count tricks of opponents.

Play your winners at once, however, (1) with a weak or short trump suit, (2) with aces and tens that may be trumped if the partners get discard opportunities, or (3) when you can win only by running home at once with your tricks.

Do not shin the first lead unless you win

and can lead trumps twice before giving up the lead. Regardless of which opponent starts a suit, one opponent is likely to have a lone card in the suit.

Maneuver to keep the lead where it will help you most. That place is oftenest in the hand of left-hand opponent so both opponents must play on the trick ahead of you.

As Player you must know at all times which trumps have been played and either the points you have or the opponents have. Otherwise you do not have the information needed to decide on your next plays. Many games are lost by failure to count points and trumps.

In solos count opponents' points because you do not know what is in the skat. In other games usually count your own points. If you can count both opponents' and your points, do so.

The Layaway

In games where you as Player use the skat, you lay away two of the 12 cards in place of the skat. The laid-away cards count for you. Put away losers and, when possible without weakening your hand, points equal to an average trick. Rarely lay away aces; the opponents quickly find out and pick up the count on your hand. Rather, lay away tens. You make up the one-point difference by keeping the opponents guessing.

In choosing between possible discards, make the one that will hold opponents to least net points and leave the hand strongest.

Examples: (1) With clubs as trump and spade 7, heart A-10-9, and diamond 10-7, lay away spade

7 and diamond 10; (2) with clubs as trump and spade 8-7, heart A-10, and diamond K-Q, discard diamond K-Q. In the first example you limit the opponents to a maximum of 15 points in diamonds and none in spades compared with 21 points in spades if you lay away both diamonds. In the second case, you save seven points by discarding diamonds rather than spades since the diamond K-Q if held up usually will be captured by opponents.

With a short trump suit, try to hold a strong side suit like A-10-x to force trumps of opponents which cannot be pulled by trump leads.

Play of Trump

Jacks Only. To retain control of the game by using up the opponents' jacks, play trumps as follows:

With only one jack, lead it at first chance, no matter what jack it is. It may drop two of opponents' three jacks.

With two jacks, one the club, lead the club jack. With the spade and heart jacks, do not ordinarily lead a jack until one opponent has played a jack unless you have three or all suits stopped. With the spade and diamond or the heart and diamond jacks, do not lead trump unless you have all suits stopped, know positively from the bidding that each opponent has a jack, or want the opponents to lead.

With three jacks and a side suit of three or more cards like A-K-9 or 10-Q-9-7, ordinarily do not lead a jack until you have led a low card once from such suit. Thus you prevent the opponent who has no jack from discarding a lone card of such suit on a trump lead to get blank and smear when

his partner later takes a trick in the suit. With all jacks except the club, you have the choice of forcing the top trump out by a jack lead or by play of side suits. If you lead trumps, usually lead the spade jack to bluff left-hand opponent out of smearing if he does not have the club jack.

In exceptional cases vary the play of the jacks from above.

Jacks and a Suit. It is mathematically true that trumps held by the opponents will be divided between their hands unevenly more often than not. In fact, the common or natural division is one more or less than an even split.

Six trumps held by the opponents will be divided 4-2 one-half the time and 3-3 one-third the time; five will be divided 3-2 nearly two-thirds of the time; four, 3-1 one-half and 2-2 one-third the time; three, 2-1 three-fourths of the time; and two will be divided half the time.

In view of the above, usually play trump to give up your losing tricks while both opponents hold trumps. Thus you prevent smears. But note the exceptions to this rule in the next paragraph.

If you do not have both ace and ten of trump, lead a losing jack to make the opponents play a higher jack as the price of getting their ace or ten of trump home.

If you hold the two high jacks so you can pick up a jack, ace, or ten that may be alone or with only one other trump in an opponent's hand, play the high jacks at once. Example: CJ-SJ-10-K-Q-9-8. The opponents' trumps, if not divided 2-2, probably will be divided 3-1 and the ace may be alone to offset the usual advantage of leading

a trump loser first to prevent a smear. Also, if you hold the club jack with two or all three spot cards of the trump suit and without the ace or ten, lead the club jack because you may catch the ace, ten, or king and queen or drop a jack.

With the ace or ten of trump but without the club jack, lead any jack you hold to establish the ace or ten as high trump.

Without either the eight or nine of trump, avoid leading the seven after the first trick because if trumps are badly divided, you may give the opponents an extra trump trick and smear.

Trumping a Side Suit. Trump with the highest count trump not needed to pull opponents' trumps. If you think the opponent to your left can over-trump your ace or ten and the led card is an ace or ten, trump with the highest jack you have.

Bad Trump Division. When you find the trumps badly divided and cannot pull them or when one opponent holds such trump cards as to give him extra tricks if you continue trump, stop playing trump and play side suits to force out opposing trumps or get points home. You usually will give the opponents fewer points by this line of play than by continuing trump. Example: Holding HJ-DJ-A-9-7, you find CJ-SJ-10-Q-8 held by one opponent who overtakes the first jack lead but lets you hold the trick with your second jack lead. If you continue leading trump, he can get three trump tricks with a smear from partner on each trick.

Play of Side Suits

If the opponents hold five of the seven cards in a side suit, the five cards will be divided between their hands 3-2 nearly two-thirds of the

time and 4-1 one-third of the time; if they hold four cards of a side suit, the cards will divide 3-1 half the time and 2-2 one-third the time; if they hold three, the cards will divide 2-1 three-fourths of the time; two cards will be divided half the time.

From the natural division of the side suits, it follows that usually your best opening lead in a side suit is that card which will give the opponents their winning trick in the suit while both must follow suit. Thus you prevent smears. Example: A-K-Q, lead K or Q; 10-K-Q, lead 10. Exception: With A-x-x or A-x-x-x, play of the ace will drop one or more count cards; hence the ace often is led. With A-K-x-x, lead of the ace sometimes catches the ten alone. However, to establish the suit to take remaining tricks, lead a small card.

With a five-card suit headed by ace without the ten, lead the ace because half the time you will pick up the ten but, if not, lead of a lower card does not prevent a smear.

When you play second to a trick and hold 10-K only, usually play the ten at once because the lead may have the ace; if he does not, you still force play of the ace on the first trick.

Frequently you may have insufficient trumps to pull all those held by one opponent. Then lead a strong side suit like A-10-x. If the opponent with trumps must follow, you get the points home; if not, you force him to trump. With no such suit, nevertheless get home what points you can or throw the lead to the opponents. With only jacks as trumps, lead your longest suit first, because if one opponent trumps, you will not set up a long suit in the other opponent's hand as may happen if you lead your short-suit ace.

Do not lead your side suit aces except in situations just described because if opponents start the suits, you usually will get a king or queen on the trick for more points.

Shinning

Both in trump and side suits, the failure of either the Player or an opponent to take a trick when holding a card that could do so or the taking of a trick with other than the highest card held in the suit is called "shinning." Most shinning occurs late in the game.

The purpose of a shin is to get the most out of a tenace. A tenace is a combination of the top and third highest or the second and fourth highest cards of trump or of a suit. Examples: Trump, CJ-HJ-K; side suit, A-K or 10-Q-x.

Before shinning, remember what the common division is of the cards held by opponents. As Player shin only when you can win no other way.

Playing second on a trick from 10-x or 10-x-x play the x-card without hesitation because the opponent playing third will rarely shin his partner's first lead and frequently not later leads but will play the ace if held. Exceptions: If you think the leader has the ace, play the ten, particularly if the king is led. With 10-Q, always play the ten if the king is led.

If the opponents shin your 10-x holding and their play of the ace will pick up your ten, discard it at first chance so you can trump the ace. Thus you gain 11 points. Or, if opponent to your right shins and you have no chance to get rid of the ten, lead it right out. You may bluff left-hand opponent out of smearing.

Discards

Discard losing cards on low-count tricks of opponents to save points. Example: You have no spades but hold the diamond 8 and the heart A-10-7 as side suits. The left-hand opponent leads the spade K and his partner plays the Q. If you discard the diamond 8, you lose seven points compared with 21 you might lose in diamonds.

Occasionally use discards to deceive the opponents. From 10-K-x or 10-Q-x, for example, discard the small card to decoy opponents into leading the suit or smearing the ace in the belief you hold only one card in such suit.

Play of Nulls and Open Nulls

If you have the opening lead, lead a lone eight. If you do not lead it, especially in an open null, the card may beat you. The opponent with the seven may lead your long suit until his partner discards all his cards in the suit of the eight-spot and then will lead the seven.

If you must lead from such combination as 7-9-J (which is unbeatable if led to by opponents) lead the nine, not the seven, or you may be forced later to take a trick with the nine.

Play of Ramsch

Since no one has a bidding hand, one jack or one ace may be in the skat when ramsch is played. Therefore avoid leading a black jack because one opponent may have no jack and will discard an ace or ten. Also avoid taking the tenth trick, because the skat cards count against the person who takes the last trick. When possible, trump a low-count trick with a black jack.

Try to keep low cards and the diamond jack as "duckers" with which to avoid taking the lead or to give the lead to another. Play or discard trick-taking cards early. With ace and any card except the ten, play the ace at once when you play third, unless the ten is on the trick.

Best leads are low lone cards; the diamond jack; a queen or spot card from combinations like A-Q-8, 10-9-7, K-Q-8, or Q-8; or lone kings or tens while still holding "duckers." Do not lead a lone ten if there is a chance to discard it.

Be sure each person takes a trick. It does you no good to take only a few points if another takes no tricks; he wins. Divide your high-count discards between the two others as evenly as possible.

CHAPTER IV

Partnership Play

Defensive play requires close teamwork by you and your partner and the exchange of all possible information through the play of your cards. Play as a partner is more difficult than as the Player. Since, however, you are a partner about two-thirds of the time, good defensive play is essential to your success in skat.

The general strategy of you and your partner is to figure out what the Player's hand looks like; what he laid away, if he used the skat, or what is in the skat, if he did not use it; and what line of play is most likely to beat him. The bidding may help you locate jacks and long suits. Once you or your partner starts a definite line of play, do not change except for good reason. The Player will gain by hit-and-miss defensive play.

General Suggestions:

1. When possible, keep the Player "in the middle," playing second to the trick with one partner leading and the other playing last. Player is at a disadvantage when he must guess what his left-hand opponent will do.

2. If you cannot keep the Player "in the middle," try to keep him in the lead, especially late in the game, if you hold 10-x or a tenace like A-K, which will win two tricks if the Player leads but only one trick if you lead.

3. Keep the pressure on the Player at all

times by the play of count cards, the threat that an ace or ten will be played back of him, or the persistent lead of a suit to make him either trump or give up count cards. Do not let him discard a loser cheaply.

4. Get home all the count points you can on each trick consistent with holding back cards to take later tricks. When you hold touching cards, win a trick with the highest card of the sequence, as ace from A-10-K.

5. Keep track of points you and your partner take, what trumps have been played, and which top cards in each suit have been played. Watch the cards carefully to get signals from your partner and to get indications where remaining cards are.

6. The first objective of you and your partner in count-card game is to get out of schneider by taking 30 points; second, to beat the Player by getting 60 points; and third, on rare occasions, to "schneider" or "schwarz" him. "No schneider" adds at least 5 and as much as 20 points to the Player's score, depending on the game played. Once you and your partner are out of schneider, hold back aces and guarded tens for tricks and shin against the Player if you see no other way to get 60 or more points. The shin may let your partner get blank to smear on the next trick.

7. Usually discard from your weakest short suit until you are blank. Usually smear from your longest strong suit. Exception: With Player at your left, smear 10 from 10-x at first chance or you may lose it if he holds the ace and shins.

8. Avoid plays that may mislead your partner. Be consistent in use of lead, smear, discard, and follow-suit signals. They are stated below.

9. If you hold two or more jacks and must play one, play the lowest on a trick taken by the Player, play the lowest necessary to take a trick led by the Player or your partner, but lead the highest. Thus you help your partner locate the jacks.

10. To help your partner locate cards, do not play a seven until it is the last card of a suit except when you must play it to avoid giving the Player a count-card or to hold your remaining card or cards of the suit to take a trick. First play the next lowest spot card.

11. The type of defense varies with the game played. The three principal styles of defense in count-card games are (1) against suit turns, (2) against suit solos, and (3) against grand games.

Discarding

"Discard" means the play of a king, queen, or lower card of another suit on a trump or suit trick to which you cannot follow. The purpose of the discard is to get blank in the discarded suit and to tell partner you have no trick in the suit.

Because skat suits are short, it is not practical to indicate strong suits by discarding from them as is done in bridge.

Therefore, when possible, discard first a suit in which you cannot take a trick, preferably a one-card or two-card suit, to show that your strength, if any, lies elsewhere.

If the first card you discard was lone, use your second chance to discard to show another weak suit and to show your first discard was a one-card suit. With two cards in the suit first discarded,

use the second discard to become blank and ready to smear on partner's trick.

The discard of two cards of a suit, high card first, low card second, shows only two cards were held in the suit. This play is called an echo. Thus with only 9-8 or 9-7, play the nine first; with 8-7, the eight first; but with 9-8-7, the eight, then the nine, and last the seven.

With a choice of two weak suit discards, make the first from the suit of the same color as the strongest suit to indicate the strong suit. Not all skatplayers use this color signal (or other signals), but it is particularly valuable in grand games.

Discard a lone worthless trump under a higher trump of the Player on your partner's suit load. Thus you tell partner you are ready to smear on a trump trick. This same play can be made ahead of the Player if he probably will trump the trick.

Smearing

"Smear" means the play of a count card, which might take a trick if held back, in order to increase a trick's points.

Smear a ten to show you do not have the ace of the suit smeared. Smear of an ace means you may have the ten. Smear of a king or queen denies possession of the ten but not the ace, which you may hold back to capture the Player's ten.

Usually smear from the longest strong suit or else smear cards in danger of capture.

Whether to use a high-count card as smear or to take a trick is a decision constantly facing

you on defense. Be guided by these considerations; (1) Is the Player short in the suit. If not, will you or partner still have the suit stopped if you smear the highest card you hold. (2) Without such information, ordinarily smear from your longest suit. (3) Smear a lone ten, king, or queen at first chance. (4) Do not usually smear (a) a ten guarded twice, (b) at Player's left, a ten with one other lower card, or (c) the ace of a side suit in which you do not hold the ten except to make 30 and get out of schneider or to make 60 and beat the Player.

There is an old saying, "Against turns, smear your aces and hold your tens for tricks." There is much truth in the statement because the Player in a turn frequently lays away a suit in which he does not hold the ace.

Partnership Play Against Suit Turns

General

The average suit turn hand of the Player after the turn and layaway has five trumps and five cards in at least two side suits. The other six trumps half the time will be divided 4-2 between you and your partner.

The most effective way to beat the Player is to break down his trump control. You try to make the Player use up his trumps on leads of one side suit so he cannot lead trumps and drop his opponents' trumps two for one.

Because of the Player's opportunity to lay away cards and create blanks in one or more side suits, avoid leading an ace until you discover which side suit the Player does not have.

Do not shin your partner's first lead.
Return partner's opening lead at first chance.
He had a reason for his lead.

When your partner trumps the Player's lead,
do not smear a high-count card of the led suit if
it is sure to take a later trick on which partner
can smear.

Lead of Side Suits

With the Player at your left, usually lead
and continue leading your longest side suit.

With Player at your right, usually lead your
shortest suit.

The purpose of both leads is to get the partner
at Player's left (called "behind the Player")
blank in a side suit so he can smear, trump, or
discard on re-leads of the suit by his partner.

With four or more trumps, usually play your
longest strong suit, regardless of position, to
make the Player use up his trumps. By leading
your own strong suit, you protect partner's high
cards to be smeared later on your trump tricks.

With three or less trumps, usually load low
to save your smear cards or lead short so you can
use up your trumps on return leads and be able
later to smear if your partner wins trump tricks.

With a choice of leads through your partner,
lead a lone king or king from K-Q or K-x rather
than a suit like Q-x, x-x, or 10-x because a king
lead gives the Player less chance to shin and does
not put partner's ten on the spot.

Lead a lone ten from any position if you see no chance to smear it to partner. If the Player has the ace, you will lose the ten anyway, while if you lead it, king and queen in partner's hand will take later tricks on which you can smear. In any event you give partner valuable information.

With no better lead, lead a suit which the Player discards or your partner smears. Re-lead a suit on which your partner discarded to let him blank a suit with one or more further discards.

Four-card or longer suit: (1) With both ace and ten, usually lead the ace; (2) without the ace, lead the highest spot-card through Player but lowest spot-card through partner. The latter lead permits partner to overtake your card.

Three-card suit: (1) With the ace, usually lead it; (2) with the ace and king, occasionally lead the king through Player because if he holds the guarded ten and does not play it on the king, you may trap it; (3) without the ace, usually lead the highest card except the ten.

Two-card suit: Usually lead the higher card unless it is the ten.

Depart from the above leads to gain an extra needed trick or to get partner into the lead.

Leads of Trump

If the Player plays side suits rather than trump, lead trump at your first chance. Lead trumps on other occasions if you can pick up the Player's remaining trumps or see other advantage to be gained. Usually lead a low trump through Player but a jack from Player's left unless you

know your partner can play a jack to keep Player from getting his ace or ten home.

If partner is at your right and is out of trump and you have the highest trumps, lead them if you fear he would not smear on Player's trump leads or you want him to smear an ace or ten to get out of schneider or to beat the Player.

When you lead trump, say "trump" to prevent your partner's misplaying.

Following Suit in Side Suits

To help your partner locate remaining cards, usually play as follows:

On a trick taken by the Player, play the lowest spot card other than the seven but play the seven if it is the only spot card in the suit.

Playing third on a trick won by partner, play your highest card except when you want to hold it to take a later trick.

When you play the seven on a trick won by partner, you indicate that either you still have the highest remaining card or are blank.

With only two cards in a suit, echo just as in discards by playing the higher first and the lower second to show you have no more.

When playing ahead of the Player on a trick on which your partner starts a new suit, usually play as follows:

On partner's ace play your highest card other than the ten. However, play the ten to get out of schneider or beat the Player.

On partner's king or lower card, play the ace if held. If not, but holding the ten and king or queen, play queen on partner's king or lower and king on partner's queen or lower to make the Player use his ace at once and make your ten high.

With the ten after the ace is gone, play the ten on partner's king or lower only if you want Player to trump or you think he still has a card in the suit.

In cases not covered above, play the lowest card necessary to overtake partner's card or to prevent the Player from shinning.

When playing second ahead of your partner, let him take the trick if possible so he can lead through the Player. If, however, the Player may be leading a lone card, play your highest card. Take the lead when you want to return partner's opening lead of another suit.

Second Hand Play of Trump

At second hand you have the hard task of guessing which trumps the Player and your partner hold because you play ahead of partner on leads by the Player. Remember the bidding to locate the jacks. General principles for second hand trump play are:

1. Either cover Player's jack to protect any smear of your partner or, if partner probably has a higher jack, play a count card unless it is sure to take a later trick.

2. When possible, let your partner take the trick to get the Player between you. However, if you are short in trump but have a jack, play the jack at once unless you have ace or ten to save.

3. If the Player leads any but the club jack, play your highest card if the Player with all jacks higher than that led can pick it up. Example: Player leads spade jack. With ace and one small trump, play ace because if Player has the club jack he will take the ace anyway.

4. With only two trumps, the diamond jack with king or less, play jack first if the Player leads a jack. This play helps your partner locate the jacks and possibly save ace or ten of trump. With three trumps, one the diamond jack and the others king or less, play the diamond jack on the second trump lead if such play may help partner, unless the jack will take a trick. Make the same play with heart jack and one trump, king or less.

5. With four or more trumps, defer taking your final trump tricks until partner can smear.

6. If the Player leads low, play your highest card other than a jack, unless the card is sure to take a later trick.

Third Hand Play of Side Suits

Both partner and Player play ahead of you on the trick when you are third hand. Avoid taking the lead except to unblock your partner's long suit or to get home an ace or ten you will lose otherwise. See "Smearing" and "Second Hand Play" for situations you encounter also playing third.

Third Hand Play of Trump

If at Player's right, overtake your partner's trump when possible without sacrifice of a trick and get the Player "in the middle." See "Second Hand Play" for correct play of the diamond jack, heart jack, and other trumps.

Example of Defense Against a Suit Turn

The following hand is not given as an example of perfect bidding and play but merely to illustrate defense against turns.

	(Player)	
	J-C-1098	
	S-AQ	
	H-A98	
(Lead)	J-D- -	
C-KQ		C-A7
J-S-97	(Layaway)	S-10K8
J-H- -		H-10KQ7
D-A10K9	D-87	D-Q

The first bidder became the Player after Lead held 10, passed 12, and the second bidder also passed. The club 8 and diamond 7 were in the skat. The Player turned the club 8 as trump and laid away the two diamonds. The play went:

Trick	Player	Partners
1. DA, C10, DQ	24	
2. DJ, CA, HJ		15
3. D9, C8, C7	24	
4. HA, H7, CK		30
5. DK, C9, S8	28	
6. H8, H10, D10		50
7. HK, S9, H9		54
8. SK, S7, SA	43	
9. CJ, HQ, SJ	50	
10. SQ, S10, CQ		70

Note at tricks 1, 3, and 5 how Lead led and re-led his best suit to make the Player use up trump. At trick 3 he led the diamond 9 to make it appear his partner had the bare ten. Instead the partner got rid of his remaining worthless trump so he could smear on a trump trick. On trick 5 Lead led the

diamond K because the Player must trump to stop a smear by the partner. Partner then discarded from his shortest remaining suit to show he did not hold the spade ace and to avoid playing the heart Q which would give the Player three points and might cause Lead to believe the Player held remaining tricks in hearts.

Partnership Play Against Suit Solos

General

The Player's average suit solo hand has five or six trumps and not more than three losing cards in side suits. The trump usually is strong with either two or more jacks or at least one jack and A-10. Obviously the type of defense used against suit turns is not likely to beat a good solo hand. Since the skat is not used, the Player has no chance to lay away losers.

To beat most suit solos, you and your partner must bunch all possible count on side-suit tricks you take and give the Player no chance to discard losers on low-point tricks.

Leads

Regardless of position, lead an ace, if held. With a choice of two aces, one held with the ten, lead the ace backed by the ten. With a choice of two aces, neither held with the ten, lead the one of the shorter suit from Player's left and that of the longer suit from Player's right.

Once the ace and ten have been played, start another suit unless you at Player's right know that your partner can trump or smear.

Sometimes you will find it well after leading ace from A-10 to lead another ace before you play the ten or the Player may discard a loser to give up 10 to 15 points compared with 21 or more he will lose if you lead the other ace first while he holds the loser.

Second and Third Hand Side Suit Play

If your partner leads an ace, smear the ten if held when playing second if there is any chance the Player must follow suit. Three side-suit tricks of 21 points or two such tricks, one of which picks up a lone king or queen of the Player, plus a trump trick containing ace or ten total enough points to beat the Player.

Play of Trump

The play of trump is the same as in a suit turn.

Example of Defense Against Suit Solo

The hand below illustrates how play in a suit solo goes and is not intended to show perfect bidding and play.

	(Player)	
	J-C-10K7	
	J-S-Q	
	J-H-Q	
(Lead)	D-AK	
C - -		C-AQ98
S-A109	(Skat)	S-K7
H-A87	S-8	H-10K
J-D-1087	H-9	D-Q9

First bidder played a club solo after Lead passed 21 and second bidder passed. The play went;

Trick	Player	Partners
1. SA, SQ, SK		18
2. HA, HQ, H10		42
3. S10, CK, S7	14	
4. HJ, CQ, DJ	21	
5. SJ, C9, H8	23	
6. CJ, C8, H7	25	
7. C7, CA, D10		63
8. HK, D8, C10	39	
9. DA, D9, D7	50	
10. DK, DQ, S9	57	

Had the lead hand played the spade 10 before the heart A, the Player would have won by discarding the heart Q on the spade 10 to save himself 11 points. The partner with four trumps knew his ace would take a trick unless Player had all four jacks, so at trick 4 he held his ace back. The Player could have won by making the safety play of club 7 at trick 4 although holding the three highest jacks, providing he next got a diamond lead and shinned with the king.

Partnership Play in Grand Games

The general strategy of you and your partner in playing against a grand solo, guckser, or grand turn is (1) to force the Player to use up his jacks and lose control of the game and (2) to create smearing opportunities by discarding short suits and leading long suits.

Leads

Usually lead the ace of your longest suit, regardless of position. With no ace, lead your longest suit from any position. The Player is likely to be forced to trump if you lead a long suit and is not likely to have a ten established by the lead.

Occasionally lead a lone card when holding one jack that the Player can take. The partner may have the ace, or the Player with the ace may shin. In either event you can get the jack home on the return lead.

Without the ace but with the ten in a long suit, usually lead the card next below the ten. After the ace is played, lead the ten next.

Without ace or ten, usually lead the highest card of the longest suit.

Rarely lead a jack against the Player or you may kill off a jack in partner's hand. However, if you can take the Player's trump, do so, particularly if you have an established suit or you think your partner has one.

Second Hand Play

On Player's jack lead, take the trick if you can. If you cannot, but hold two jacks, always play the lower to help your partner locate the jacks. Without a jack, signal by discard from your poorest suit or by smear from your best suit. Most of the time a discard and blanking of a suit works better than a smear, especially if your partner plays after you and you do not know if he can take the trick.

For play of side suits, see the section on defense against turns. Keep the pressure on the Player by fattening tricks in suits he does not hold to make him use a jack. After the ace is gone, always overtake your partner's king lead with your ten.

If your partner opens a card other than ace in a suit you do not have and you hold a losing

jack, trump. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose. You get the Player in the middle, you get home two more points, and you may catch the Player's ace or ten. If he overtrumps, you may establish a jack in your partner's hand as top trump.

Example of Defense Against a Grand Game

The following hand is typical of play in a grand game. It is not intended to show perfect bidding and play.

	(Player)	
	J-C-A10	
	J-S- -	
	H-AK8	
(Lead)	D-A97	
C-8		C-KQ97
S-A10K97	(Layaway)	S- -
H-9		J-H-10Q7
D-10KQ	S-Q8	J-D-8

The first bidder played a grand turn after the others passed and he turned the spade jack. He laid away two spades. The play went:

Trick	Player	Partners
1. SA, D7, D8	3	11
2. D10, DA, DJ		34
3. C9, C8, CA	14	
4. H8, HQ, H9		37
5. C7, S9, C10	24	
6. SJ, HJ, S7	28	
7. D9, CK, DK		45
8. SK, CJ, CQ	37	
9. HA, H7, DQ	51	
10. HK, H10, S10		69

The Player started to discard losers and wait for a lead to one of his three aces. The discard of the diamond 8 after the Player discarded diamond 7 told Lead his partner was then blank in diamonds and had a jack, otherwise he would have smeared. Therefore Lead led diamond 10 at trick 2. On trick 4 partner to Player's left shinned with the heart Q because he did not endanger his ten by the play. He knew the Player held no spades and could not be long in clubs. The Player's heart lead at trick 4 instead of first pulling the opponents' remaining jack would have won the game if the heart 10 had fallen. The hope of the Player was that hearts were divided or that the opponent with the ten would play it while his partner had a heart and could not smear.

Partnership Play Against Nulls

Open Null

You see the Player's hand before the first lead. Study it before you play. Look for a lone eight, a two-card suit of 9-8, or queen or higher with only two low-card guards. These are the weak points of the hand.

Standard tactics against open nulls are:

1. Lead of your shortest suit.

2. Lead of a long suit in which the Player has cards but no loser to let your partner discard high cards from other suits, particularly if he is at Player's right.

3. Lead through the Player's guarded high cards to let your partner play his higher cards third on the trick and to use up the Player's low guard cards. Example: Lead of J-10-9 through

Player's Q-8-7 so partner can play A-K by taking the trick with ace, putting you back into the lead in another suit to lead again, taking the second lead with king, and putting you back into the lead in another suit to make the third lead of the suit and beat the Player.

4. Lead of a low card which the Player must overtake if your partner is blank in the suit or holds a card lower than the Player's lowest.

Example of Defense Against Open Null

	(Player)	
	C-97	
	S-1087	
	H-J97	
(Lead)	D-98	
C-K10		C-AQ8
S-A	(Skat)	S-KJ9
H-AKQ10	C-J	H-8
D-KJ7	S-Q	D-AQ10

The Player bid 10. The others passed. The play went: (1) HA, HJ, H8; (2) HK, H9, DA; (3) HQ, H7, DQ; (4) DK, D9, D10; (5) D7, D8; and Player lost. The second type of defense beat the hand.

Null

Remember the bids. Lead your shortest suit. Return your partner's lead, probably a lone card, so he can discard high cards and possibly clear out a suit in which you can beat the Player. If nothing else works, lead a seven or eight of a long suit or give your partner the lead. The methods used against open nulls also are useful.

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